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SUBJECT: REAGAN MONUMENT REDEDICATION HIGHLIGHTS GRENADA INTERVENTION
25TH ANNIVERSARY

Summary

¶1. (U) In a moving October 25 ceremony, the Ambassador re-dedicated the Ronald Reagan Monument in St. George's, Grenada honoring U.S. Service members who gave their lives in the 1983 U.S.-Caribbean intervention to restore democracy to Grenada. The Ambassador read a letter of appreciation from former First Lady Nancy Reagan, while SOUTHCOM Lt. General Glenn Spears and retired Brigadier General Granville Amos, a veteran of the intervention, also delivered remarks. The ceremony, which was attended by family members and friends of seven of the nineteen service members who lost their lives and a large contingent of former marines who also participated in the 1983 intervention, was the highlight of a day of "Thanksgiving" activities that has become a tradition in Grenada, and has sparked a re-assessment in Grenada - led by Prime Minister Thomas - of the need to close this painful chapter in the country's history and protect democratic institutions. End Summary

Thanksgiving Day Service

¶2. (U) October 25 Thanksgiving Day celebrations began with a 9:00 am government-organized church service in Prime Minister Tillman Thomas' home parish. In her remarks, the Ambassador acknowledged the shared history between the United States and Grenada and praised Grenada's continued pursuit of democratic ideals. She recognized the close friendship between the two countries and praised Grenada's success. Grenada's official Thanksgiving Day celebrations were started in honor of the October 25, 1983 arrival of U.S. and Caribbean forces in response to a plea for help, but the holiday has evolved to include a broader message of giving thanks for all of Grenada's accomplishments and the inner strength of its people. The Prime Minister's message reflected both the broader theme as well as the effort that must be maintained to preserve democracy.

St. George's University Memorial Service

¶3. (U) St. George's University (SGU) holds a memorial service for the American service members who were killed in Grenada in ¶11983. On each fifth anniversary year, the University pays to fly at least one family member of those killed to Grenada for the event. Embassy Grenada was instrumental in helping SGU recreate its list of family members that had been lost during Hurricane Ivan in 2004 when University buildings were damaged. Post worked with the Office of the Secretary of Defense to locate and make sure the families received SGU's invitation. Family members and friends of seven of the nineteen service members killed in 1983 during Operation Urgent Fury attended.

¶4. (U) SGU Chancellor, Dr. Charles Modica, hosted a dinner at

the University Club on October 24 for the family and friends of the fallen which included several former SGU students and faculty who were evacuated from Grenada in 1983 by the U.S. military. The U.S. delegation, led by the Ambassador, attended. Family participants described their feelings coming to Grenada twenty-five years after the deaths of their loved ones, while the students and faculty shared their thoughts about the impact of the evacuation. The Ambassador thanked the families for the sacrifices of their loved ones in defense of democracy and said how touched she was listening to their comments about coming to Grenada, some for the first time. General Spears echoed the Ambassador's words and offered a toast in water to the fallen servicemen, to their courage and their sacrifice.

Re-dedication of Ronald Reagan Monument

15. (U) The most talked-about event of the day, though, was the re-dedication of a restored monument to fallen U.S. Service members organized by the Embassy and hosted by the Ambassador. The Ronald Reagan monument near St. George's Point Salines International Airport (PSIA) was built by Grenada to hold a plaque commemorating the 1983 U.S. - Caribbean intervention which President Ronald Reagan donated to Grenada during his 1986 visit to the island. The concrete monument had been allowed to deteriorate over the years, and the Government of Grenada requested several times after Hurricane Ivan devastated the country in 2004 for U.S. help to restore it.

16. (U) The Ambassador made the restoration project a top priority for the Mission, with the goal of completing the project in time for the twenty-fifth anniversary of Operation

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Urgent Fury on October 25, 2008. She convinced U.S. Southern Command to provide an architect and construction engineers through the State Partnership Program to lead the reconstruction effort. Once the design was completed and the costs estimated, she found donors willing to fund the restoration of the monument. Embassy Grenada oversaw the actual work on the monument, engaging the GOG throughout.

17. (U) In addition to the family and friends of seven of the nineteen killed in 1983 in Grenada, a contingent of 52 U.S. Marines and their families attended the re-dedication ceremony for the Ronald Reagan Monument. The Ambassador re-dedicated the monument to those who put their lives on the line, and especially by those who gave their lives, in defense of the principles of democracy and the rule of law. The Ambassador described how pleased Mrs. Reagan was to hear of plans to refurbish the monument and read aloud the very moving letter Mrs. Reagan wrote to mark the event, noting: "I know Ronnie would join me in gratitude to you for ensuring their sacrifice will never be forgotten".

18. (U) Lt. General Glenn Spears, Deputy at the U.S. Southern Command, contributed an honor guard to the ceremony, which played Taps to a setting sun before a rapt audience. Spears spoke about the sacrifices the service members made in 1983 and assured the families of the fallen soldiers that their sacrifices would not be forgotten; nor were those sacrifices in vain as Grenada has continued along the path of democracy. Brigadier General Granville Amos, who led a contingent of the Marines into battle during Operation Urgent Fury, also spoke in remembrance of fallen colleagues.

19. (U) Prime Minister Tillman Thomas called for vigilance in protecting Grenada's democracy. He expressed great respect for those who died in the struggle to preserve democracy and democratic institutions. The world, Thomas noted, has changed in the twenty-five years and there are new threats to democracy, including drug trafficking and ammunition movements throughout the region. Thomas declared that "I want this monument to remind us of the importance of democracy". He acknowledged the contributions of Caribbean leaders and forces in 1983 who

contributed to the 1983 intervention. Thomas ended by thanking the families of the U.S. servicemen who gave their lives in Grenada for their sacrifices and reminding Grenadians that "lives were lost in the process of restoring our democratic institution to Grenada ~ and we have to be thankful to those who made that supreme sacrifice".

COMMENT

¶10. (SBU) The restoration of the monument and the ceremony to re-dedicate it was a deeply moving experience for many of the veterans and their families. Of particular local note, PM Thomas' remarks both at the ceremony and earlier in the day have generated serious debate and discussion in Grenada about the legacy of the intervention. Thomas leads the first government since the intervention that is composed mostly of Bishop supporters and former revolutionary elements. His extemporaneous remarks about the need to protect and preserve democracy, then, carry additional weight in the country, and particularly in his party, about the need to heal the wounds that remain from the conflict and continue building democracy. Perhaps his most compelling statement, delivered at the rededication, sums up the evolving sentiment best: "It is so fundamental because the very said people who, some of them, got killed on the 19th, it appears in the last days they themselves recognized the importance of the rule of law and even the media, because there was reliable information that the late Prime Minister was trying to contact journalists to let the outside world know what was happening. You see I am making the point to show you the importance of a free society. In your heyday, you suppress the media, but there is a time when you really want rescue, you try to get the media but it was too late." End
Comment

¶11. (U) Ambassador Ourisman cleared this message.
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